

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
/066 W

-----006178 172251Z /66

P 171527Z MAY 78  
FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000  
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTREAL 999

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, CA  
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH QUEBEC LIBERAL LEADER RYAN

1. SUMMARY: CONFIDENT, DISCIPLINED, LEARNING POLITICS FAST, CLAUDE RYAN CLEARLY INTENDS TO BE THE MAN WHO FINALLY SETTLES THE FRENCH/ENGLISH PROBLEM IN CANADA. HE BELIEVES HE MUST OVERCOME TRUDEAU AS WELL AS LEVESQUE TO DO SO. AND HE WANTS TO DO IT DELIBERATELY, ON HIS OWN TIMETABLE. HE SAYS WITH SOME PRIDE THAT THE FEDS WILL FIND HIM TOUGHER THAN LEVESQUE, AND HE MAY BE RIGHT. HE HAS GREAT APPEAL AS A NATIONALIST, BUT ONE WHOSE POLITICS ENTAIL LESS RISK THAN THE PQ'S, AND HE KNOWS IT. THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION ABOUT HIS FEDERALISM, BUT IF HE SUCCEEDS, FEDERAL CANADA WILL BE A VERY DIFFERENT COUNTRY THAN NOW EXISTS. END SUMMARY.

2. LUNCED WITH RYAN AT HIS PLACE MAY 15. FOUND HIM EXHAUSTED BUT JUBILANT ABOUT HIS SUCCESS. NOT ONLY HAD THE CAMPAIGN AND CONVENTION GONE WELL, BUT RYAN CLAIMED 80,000 NEW MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL LIBERAL PARTY AND A LOT OF INTERESTING NEW CANDIDATES SINCE THE TURN OF THE YEAR. AND A NEW PRIVATE POLL  
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COMMISSIONED BY THE FEDERAL QUEBEC CAUCUS SHOWS THE PROVINCIAL LIBERALS AT 49 PERCENT VS. 41 PERCENT FOR THE PEQUISTES.

3. TACTICS. BUT RYAN IS CONSCIOUS OF THE PITFALLS AHEAD OF HIM, AND IS PLAYING HIS CARDS CAREFULLY. HIS MAJOR CONCERN IS TO PEAK TOO EARLY, AND THIS WORRY (PLUS AN UNWILLINGNESS TO BE ELECTED AS A FRENCH "UNCLE TOM" IN AN ANGLOPHONE RIDING) ACCOUNTS

FOR HIS DECISION MAY 15 NOT TO RUN FOR OFFICE NOW AND TAKE OVER AS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION LEADER. RYAN HOPES THE REFERENDUM AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE LATER RATHER THAN EARLIER (LATTER IF POSSIBLE IN 1980) NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE WANTS TO ORGANIZE IN DEPTH, BUT BECAUSE HE WANTS IT TO BE DEMONSTRATED TO THE PROVINCE THAT THE PQ'S SOLUTION WON'T WORK EITHER IN THE SOCIAL/ECONOMIC AREA, OR THE FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL AREA. WITH THIS IN MIND, RYAN IS RETHINKING THE LIBERAL OBSTRUCTIONIST TACTICS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AND MAY WELL ABANDON THEM. RYAN WANTS IF POSSIBLE TO AVOID COMING TO POWER WHEN THE PROVINCE'S ECONOMY IS AS FLAT AS IT NOW IS AND WILL BE FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER YEAR. HE RECOGNIZES THAT LEVESQUE COULD UPSET HIS CALCULATIONS BY CALLING A SNAP ELECTION THIS FALL (SAY IN SOME QUARREL WITH OTTAWA) AND IS PREACHING TO THE FEDS THE NEED TO BE PARTICULARLY CAREFUL TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH QUEBEC THIS YEAR.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. RYAN AND TRUDEAU WENT OVER THE LATTER'S PROPOSALS FOR REFORM WHEN THEY LUNCHEDED LAST WEEK. RYAN THINKS THAT THE "PROVINCIALIZATION" FORMULA TRUDEAU IS FOCUSSED ON IS A NICE IDEA FOR TIDYING UP, BUT LONG SINCE OVERTAKEN BY DEVELOPMENTS IN QUEBEC. HE EXPECTS A DERISORY REACTION WHEN TRUDEAU TABLES HIS IDEAS NEXT WEEK, AND PREDICTS FAILURE FOR THE FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL MEETING ON THE CONSTITUTION SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER. BUT NONE OF THIS FAZES HIM: HE WANTS TO BE SURE THAT NOTHING HAPPENS ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE BEFORE HE COMES TO POWER, AND EVEN THEN HE WANTS TO TAKE HIS TIME, CONFIDENTIAL

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SPENDING SEVERAL YEARS IN ANALYSIS BEFORE NEGOTIATING. ON HIS OWN IDEAS, RYAN WOULD ONLY SAY THAT HE WANTS MASSIVE REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER TO THE PROVINCES AND RECOGNITION OF QUEBEC AS "A NATION". FOR THE REST HE DOESN'T WANT TO GET PINNED DOWN NOW. RYAN IS CONSCIOUS THAT HE COULD HAVE ENORMOUS LEVERAGE IN OTTAWA IF HE DEFEATS LEVESQUE. "IF OTTAWA CAN'T MAKE IT WORK WITH ME THEN THE SEPARATISTS WILL HAVE MADE THEIR CASE."

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

/066 W

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P 171527Z MAY 78

FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 510

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MONTREAL 999

FROM AMBASSADOR

5. RELATIONS WITH OTTAWA. RYAN FINDS TRUDEAU UNCHANGED, EAGERLY ARGUING "LIKE A GRADUATE STUDENT" POSSIBLE CONSTITUTIONAL FORMULAS, BUT INCAPABLE OF MODIFYING HIS LONG-HELD CENTRALIST PHILOSOPHY. HE SPEAKS HOPEFULLY OF A DECISION BY TRUDEAU THIS FALL TO WITHDRAW FROM PUBLIC LIFE, CITING THE CURRENT SWELL OF INTEREST IN JOHN TURNER AS STRONG ENOUGH TO FORCE MANY LIBERALS TO POST THE ISSUE OF TRUDEAU'S FUTURE. IF TRUDEAU IS RE-ELECTED, RYAN EXPECTS HIM TO HAVE A SMALLER MAJORITY, OR TO FORM A MINORITY GOVERNMENT, AND TO LAST ONLY 2 OR 3 YEARS. "THE TRUDEAU ERA IS OVER" HE SAYS EXPECTANTLY. BUT RYAN FINDS CLARK (WITH WHOM HE LUNCHEDED BEFORE SEEING TRUDEAU LAST WEEK) IS A "LIGHTWEIGHT", PERSONALLY INCAPABLE OF GOVERNING CANADA. MOREOVER, A PC GOVERNMENT, WITH LITTLE OR NO REPRESENTATION FROM QUEBEC, COULD GIVE A NEW LEASE ON LIFE TO LEVESQUE WHO COULD ARGUE (HOWEVER ACCOMMODATING CLARK WERE) THAT THE ENGLISH CANADIANS HAD "SEPARATED FROM US" IN FACT IF NOT IN THEORY. RYAN INTENDS TO PUT HIMSELF IN THE GRAND TRADITION OF QUEBEC LEADERS WHO "RAN AS MUCH AGAINST OTTAWA AS AGAINST THEIR PROVINCIAL ADVERSARIES," AND WON'T HESITATE TO DISAGREE WITH OTTAWA, AS HE DID ON THE QUESTION OF THE SALES TAX.

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6. REFERENDUM. RYAN IS CONVINCED THE PQ NOT ONLY CAN'T WIN ON A STRAIGHT UP AND DOWN QUESTION ON SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION, BUT WOULD BE HUMILIATED. ON THE OTHER HAND HE IS NOT SO SURE THAT LEVESQUE COULDN'T GET A MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE. THIS SCENARIO CONCERNS HIM VERY MUCH, NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT MIGHT CUT HIM OUT OF THE START OF NEGOTIATIONS ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, BUT BECAUSE IT COULD LEGITIMIZE THE PQ AS OTTAWA'S INTERLOCUTOR. RYAN HOPES THAT PRESSURE FROM THE ULTRAS WILL PREVENT THE PQ FROM GOING FOR A NEGOTIATING MANDATE, BUT HE IS NOT SURE AND SAYS HE DOESN'T HAVE A GOOD COUNTER-STRATEGY IF IT DOES. RYAN BELIEVES THAT OTTAWA WOULD HAVE TO TALK IF THE PQ WON SUCH A REFERENDUM, AND HE HIMSELF WOULD HAVE TO SUPPORT NEGOTIATION.

7. COMMENT: RYAN IS OFF TO A FAST START, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO EVALUATE HIS FUTURE. HE PLANS WELL, HAS THOUGHT THROUGH HIS FUTURE. BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW HE WILL DO AS A COUNTERPUNCHER, OR WHEN HE IS TARGETTED AS THE FRONT-RUNNER. THE THING TO WATCH IS HOW HE REACTS WHEN HIS GAME-PLAN GOES AWRY. IF HE CAN HANDLE THAT, HE CAN GET THE INITIATIVE IN A GAME IN WHICH OTHER FRONT-RUNNERS (TRUDEAU, LEVESQUE) ARE FALTERING.  
HARPER

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## Message Attributes

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